

White Sands National Monument P.O. Box 1086 Holloman AFB, NM 88330

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World Heritage Site Nomination

The staff at White Sands National Monument has prepared a nomination to be added to the Tentative List for inscription as a World Heritage Site under the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Conservation Organization (UNESCO). If successful, White Sands would join 20 sites within the United States and more than 850 worldwide in that honor. World Heritage Sites within New Mexico include Carlsbad Caverns National Park, Taos Pueblo, and Chaco Culture National Historic Park. Inscription as a World Heritage Site carries no jurisdictional authority.

The World Heritage Convention was developed in 1972 with the United States as principal architect of the document. The United States was the first country to sign the convention in 1973 at the request of President Richard Nixon in a <u>letter to The Senate</u>. Presently, more than 184 countries are signatories to the World Heritage Convention.

As a signatory, the United States of America participates in the deliberations that lead to cultural, natural, and mixed properties being inscribed on the <u>World Heritage List</u>. These properties, known as World Heritage Sites, are the most outstanding examples of the world's cultural and natural heritage.

Currently, there are more than 850 <u>Sites</u> in 141 countries. In the United States, there are 20 World Heritage Sites, eight of which are cultural and 12 natural. Two sites of significance in the U.S. are the Statue of Liberty in New York (inscribed in 1978), and Independence Hall in Philadelphia (inscribed 1984). More natural sites are listed in the United States than from any other single country.

The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks of the Department of the Interior, through the National Park Service, conducts the U.S. World Heritage Program, including selecting and submitting nominations to the World Heritage List. The Office of International Affairs of the National Park Service is the responsible staff-level program office.

The World Heritage List as a whole is managed by a World Heritage Committee made up of representatives from signatory countries, supported by a secretariat, known as the <u>World Heritage</u> <u>Centre</u>, which is based in the headquarters of UNESCO in Paris.

The perception by some persists that inclusion of White Sands on the list of World Heritage Sites will confer jurisdiction or control of the Monument to the United Nations or another body. According to Article 4 of the World Heritage Convention of 1972:

"Each State Party to this Convention recognizes that the duty of ensuring the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage referred to in Articles 1 and 2 and situated on its territory, belongs primarily to that State. It will do all it can to this end, to the utmost of its own resources and, where appropriate, with any international assistance and co- operation, in particular, financial, artistic, scientific and technical, which it may be able to obtain."

In other words, the protection of each Site on the World Heritage List is the responsibility of the member country. Designation as a World Heritage Site will permit international cooperation in preserving and protecting sites, but not jurisdiction or require the Monument to be considered collateral for world debt.

White Sands National Monument has received support for its nomination from Senator Jeff Bingaman, Senator Pete Domenici, NM State Representative Gloria Vaughn, Alamogordo Mayor Don Carroll, Las Cruces Mayor William Mattiace, White Sands Missile Range Director Tom Berard, and the Alamogordo Chamber of Commerce.

According to the World Heritage Operational Guidelines, countries are requested to wait one year after submitting their tentative list before sending forward any nomination for a site on the tentative list.

It is anticipated that the first US World Heritage nomination of a site included on the new tentative list will be submitted by February 1, 2009 for consideration by the World Heritage Committee at its annual session in 2010. During the period between submission of the nomination by the US and the Committee's review of it, the nomination will be evaluated by the appropriate advisory body—the World Conservation Union (IUCN) for natural sites, and the International Council for Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) for cultural sites. The advisory bodies make formal site visits and consult with experts before giving their recommendation to the Committee as to whether a nominated site meets the eligibility criteria.

Finally, the draft tentative list will be published for public comment in the Federal Register this fall before final approval by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior at the end of 2007. View site applications at http://www.nps.gov/oia/topics/worldheritage/Applicants.htm.